

THE DYING BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS
EXALTED REDEEMER.

31
A
S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
MEETING-HOUSE

IN
BUTT-LANE, DEPTFORD,

ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 16, 1785,

ON OCCASION OF
THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH
OF

THE REV. JOHN OLDING,

Who, after having been thirty-one Years Pastor
of the Church assembling in that Place, fell
asleep in Jesus, in the 64th Year of his Age,
October 7, 1785.

BY STEPHEN ADDINGTON, D.D.

"OH DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING!"

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE FAMILY, AND
THE CONGREGATION.

L O N D O N:

Printed by A. RIVINGTON and J. MARSHALL:—And sold by
the AUTHOR, at Mile-End, and by J. BUCKLAND, Pater-
noster-Row, London.—And by Mr. WAINWRIGHT, Union-
Street, Deptford; and Mr. DEEDY, Greenwich-Road.

MDCC LXXXV.

THE DYING BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN HIS
EXALTED REDEEMER.

W. W. W.
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
MEETING-HOUSE

IN

BUTTLANE, DORSETT

ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 16, 1782.

ON OCCASION OF

THE MUCH LAMENTED DEATH

OF

THE REV. JOHN OLDING.

Who, after having been thirty-one Years Pastor
of the Church, and residing in that Place, fell
asleep in Jesus on the 4th Year of his Age,
October 7, 1782.

BY STEPHEN ADDINGTON, D.D.

"ON DEATH, WHERE LIVING"
PUBLISHED BY THE REQUEST OF THE FAMILY, AND
THE CONGREGATION.

L O N D O N

Printed by A. Rivington and J. Marshall—And sold by
the Author, in Little-Lane, and by J. BUCKLAND, Print-
er, Row, London.—And by Mr. Wainwright, Union-
Street, Dorchester; and Mr. Derry, Greenwich-Road.

MDCCLXXXV

Lately published, Price 5s. in Boards,

(By the same A U T H O R)

THE LIFE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE:
With Critical and Practical Remarks on
his Discourses and Writings,

Also, Price 6d.

THE DIVINE ARCHITECT:
A Sermon on Psalm cxxvii. 7, Preached,
June 2, 1785, before the Middlesex So-
ciety for Educating poor Children in the
Protestant Religion, at laying the first
Stone of a Building in Cannon-Street,
New-Road, Whitechapel, designed for
Schools, and the other Purposes of the
Charity,

Lately published, Price 2s. in Boards.

(By the same Author)

THE LIFE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE:
With Critical and Practical Remarks on
his Discourses and Writings.

Also, Price 6d.

THE DIVINE ARCHITECT:
A Sermon on Psalm cxxvii. 7. Preached,
June 2, 1785, before the Middlesex So-
ciety for Educating poor Children in the
Protestant Religion, at laying the first
Stone of a Building in Cannon-Street,
New-Road, Whitechapel, designed for
Schools, and the other Purposes of the
Charity.

I feel for you, my Christian Friends of this congregation, on that painfully bereaving Providence, which has made this to you, and to us all, the house of mourning.—
The death of your dear and justly honoured minister and pastor. He has often met you with pleasure here, to speak unto you the words of life. Many of you have attended long, with great satisfaction, on his ministrations. You will henceforth hear him no more. But you are now called upon, to hear the words he uttered upon his dying-bed, and with his last breath there: They were those of Stephen, recorded

A C T S VII. 59.

—LORD JESUS RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.—The Historian adds, ver. 60, AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.

IT is good to follow a faithful servant of Christ to his end. We hear much from his lips, and see much in his life, to instruct

B

and

and animate us, while he is living to the Lord; but there is somewhat that strikes us still more tenderly and powerfully in his dying language and behaviour, when he dies to the Lord: When in death he appears wholly devoted to Jesus; filled with his love; disposed for his praise; longing for his presence, and in high expectations from him.—By sentiments and affections like these, he honours his Master,—recommends his gospel and his service,—relieves mourning relatives,—and reconciles believing survivors to their dissolution.—If, besides forwarding these designs, a sermon on his death may tend likewise to fit and dispose any to live and die as he did, it will answer the best purposes that either speaker or hearers could expect or desire. With these wishes and views, the passage I have just read is recommended to our attention.—It contains some of the last words of Stephen; one, and the most distinguished, of the seven officers chosen by the Apostles, to assist them and the churches in the management of their temporal affairs. But, before we proceed further in the account of his death, let us recollect the character which the sacred historian

torian gives of him in the 5th and 8th verses of the preceding chapter; "He was
 " a man full of faith, and of the Holy
 " Ghost; and being full of faith he wrought
 " great miracles among the people." Somewhat of his natural talents, and spiritual taste and discernment, may be known from a pertinent and spirited discourse of his, in the former part of this chapter, addressed to a publick assembly of the Jews, of which their high-priest was president. But he spake more honourably of Christ, and more fully of the guilt of his murderers, than they could bear. They therefore laid violent hands upon him, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him. The whole account we have of his death, is in the two last verses of the chapter, from which I have been desired to select the words first read for the subject of this discourse. Wherein it will be our business,

I. To realize the circumstances in which this servant of Christ was, when he uttered the language in our text:—"he was
 " dying."

II.) To illustrate his language in those circumstances :—" Lord Jesus receive my " spirit."

And then,

III.) To trace the issue of the whole :—" He fell asleep."

The wish of Balaam will probably occur to some of you, on what you may now hear ; —may God so overrule the Providence which has directed us to this subject, and bless what may be offered upon it, as that it may prove the means of preparing you to die the death of the righteous, and of rendering your latter end both as safe and as happy as his ! With that view, I would entreat you with all seriousness,

I. To realize the circumstances in which this servant of Christ was, when he uttered the language in our text :—He was dying.

And that not merely in the sense in which we are all dying, as mortal creatures, and liable to death every moment ; but actually breathing his last. One fell by the hands
of

of an outrageous mob, in the open fields; surrounded with the cruel and profane: the other dies at home on his bed, accompanied with every assistance and relief, that either the art of medicine, or the tenderness of affectionate relatives could afford: But the issue is alike to both; expiring. Meditate on the situation, oh my soul! and know, every hearer, it will be thine; and thine soon. I wish to feel the thought while I am enlarging upon it: I wish you to feel it. Every connection, every earthly connection dissolving.—Thou wilt then be quitting every pursuit,—foregoing every pleasing prospect,—reigning every interest,—taking a long leave of every friend, even the friend of thy bosom!—nay, leaving this earthly house of thy tabernacle, to resign it to its parent dust; and thy spirit going; just going; but going whither?—Ask it, and listen to its answer; Into eternity. What a crisis this! Big with eternity. You have, perhaps, seen some of your fellow mortals in this situation; one in agonies that distorted every feature of his countenance, and made all his joints to tremble; did you ask him, What is it to die? if he could speak, he would tell you,
“hard

"hard work;" yes, dying work is hard work indeed: "pity me, pity me, oh my friends, for the hand of the Lord is upon me."— But you may have heard of some, to whom it has been a yet more fearful thing to die. Who have been struggling at once with convulsive agonies of body, and the horrors of a guilty conscience; confounded on a review of life, and shocked, to the last degree, to find it closing. All before them is dark and dreadful. Hear from one in such a state, his account of dying. Oh, says he, it is every thing horrible and alarming! My body and soul are one scene of torture. The worm that never dies has already laid hold of my vitals; and the flames are just twining about me of that fire which shall never be quenched. Dying, to me, is the beginning of hell; it is a hell within. And is it so to all? Is it to every sinner? Some such seem to die as insensible and fearless as they lived: they see nothing terrible in death. Thank God, said one in his last moments, I have a good heart; and have lived a good life; I have taken the sacrament; I die in charity with all men; and I don't doubt but God will have mercy upon me, and that I shall be happy.

happy. The two former were painful spectacles; and perhaps this not less so, to a serious and discerning friend, who knows the only solid foundation of a sinner's hope, and realizes the fatal effects of self-delusion, especially in a dying hour.

But, blessed be God, there is such a thing as a good hope through grace; and it is an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil: And dying, to the soul possessed of that hope, is the gate of life, in which the believer is often indulged at once with delightful prospects and foretastes of his future bliss. Such was death to the dear deceased. Through the fear of it, he had been almost all his life-time subject to bondage. But he tells you, in its nearest approach, the sting of death is now taken away. I have felt it, but feel it no more. All is peace within: I know in whom I have believed. I now close life with a renewed act of faith in him: cheerfully committing my immortal all to his powerful protection and tender care; confiding in which, I can leave the world, and enter upon eternity, without one painful

ful fear ; nay, with joy unspeakable and full of glory : farewell !

Thus did he finish his course. Allow me to repeat here the verse we have just been singing :

“ Jesus can make a dying bed,
“ Feel soft as downy pillows are ;
“ While on his breast I lean my head,
“ And breathe my life out sweetly there.”

We will now proceed.

II. To examine the purport of the words he uttered in these circumstances, “ Lord
“ Jesus ! receive my spirit.”

It is pleasing and instructive to observe the servants of God, in different and distant countries and ages of the word, embracing the same truths, imbibing the same spirit, actuated by the same principles, entertaining the same hopes ; and, consequently, adopting the same language, both in life and in death. David said before the Lord, (a)
“ Into thy hands I commit my spirit.” The language of the Son of God himself, in his
expiring

(a) Psal. XXXI. 5.

expiring moments was (b) "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Having exchanged the abasements and sufferings of his cross and grave, for a glorious throne at the right-hand of his Father, his disciple Stephen, when about to follow his divine Master, was honoured with a vision of his person and glory: struck with the sight, he pours out his soul before him, in the triumphant ecstasy of a living faith in his dying moments; crying out, with all the energy of exertion of which he was then capable, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Our dear brother adopted his language in a similar situation. And he appeared to speak as one that felt what he said: therein the Lord granted him the desire of his heart. And it appears from hence, that

1.) He, with Stephen, expected his spirit would exist in a state of separation from the body. Had either considered the human frame as one undistinguished mass of matter, which must all live and die together, he could not, with any propriety, have made use of such a prayer. Nor does a petition
 C like

like this accord with the notion of the soul's sinking, at death, into a totally inactive and insensible state. Having been always used to converse and act by bodily senses and organs, and to receive many of our ideas through such a medium, we have but imperfect, and, probably, inaccurate conceptions of pure spirits. We know little of the manner in which they act, enjoy, or communicate happiness to each other: But are we from thence to infer, that they cannot exist, think, or feel without bodies, without these bodies of flesh and blood which they inhabited here? The apostle Paul had no such apprehensions, when he spake of the spirits of just men as made perfect (c): when he considered such, (d) in their state of absence from the body, as being present with the Lord; and represented that as a state of happiness, far superior to every thing that he had enjoyed, or could enjoy, in the body. It plainly appears from many passages in his writings, that the hope of it, as such, perfectly reconciled him to his departure (e). The anxiety he and his brethren expressed for their departing spirits,

is

(c) Heb. XII. 23. (d) 2 Cor. V. 1-8. (e) Phil. I. 23.

is only to be accounted for upon this principle. Had we been within hearing of Stephen, when he uttered the prayer before us, we should all have concluded without a doubt, "This good man expects his soul's separate existence; and that in a state in which it will need the patronage of its exalted Lord, and be capable of enjoying it."—Moreover his language expresses,

2.) An anxious concern for its safety and happiness in that state. To the dying, and, let me add, to the living likewise, this is the one thing needful: the salvation of the soul. What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Many, alas! are bartering it away for the most despicable trifles: and some die, as they lived, totally unconcerned about it. The latter end of such is a most distressing spectacle to every thoughtful surrounding friend. To hear the sick and dying talk of nothing but food or medicine for the body, their schemes for the world, and the property, concerns, and connections they have in it. It is not pleasing, to observe those who

avow themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, painfully careful for the morrow at any time ; or distressed in the apprehension of what may become of their bodies, both in death and after it : yet such fears will, too often, crowd into the minds even of those with whom God has made an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. The dear good man who has lately left us, was, at times, painfully exercised with them. He has freely told some of you what he has felt, in the apprehension of the pains which many feel, and feel long before the change comes ; and how uncomfortably his mind has been affected, by realizing the state of the body in the grave. As to the former, the Lord made them very light and short to him ; nor did he then employ a word or a thought on the latter. His soul, his departing spirit, engaged all his attention : and the object well deserved it. The soul's the man. His intellectual, his immortal All. Every other interest is, therefore, very properly lost in that, at such a season. If that be secure, he has not only nothing to fear, but may expect to be put in immediate possession of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places with

Christ

Christ Jesus; and to be fixed in the uninterrupted and everlasting enjoyment of them.

Hence the solicitude he expresses for his soul.—Many of you well know, that your late Pastor spent his life in caring for the souls of others. You cannot have forgot, some of you, I trust, will never forget, the tenderness and fidelity with which he watched for your souls: the fervent prayers he has offered to God, with you, and for you. The tender intreaties, the solemn exhortations and warnings, and the faithful admonitions which he has addressed to you in the name of the Lord; as one that longed, yea, even travailed in birth for the salvation of your souls. And when no longer capable of expressing his concern for you thus, he retires to commit his own immortal spirit to the patronage of your and his common Lord and Redeemer. Giving you thereby a farther proof, if any were necessary, that he had been sincere in all his expressions of concern for the souls of others; and by this spirit and conduct in death, he has left behind, what will prove, an additional testimony

5

against

against those who, either in death or in life, neglect their own.

But we must proceed to remark,

3.) His language expresses a firm belief of the supreme power and authority of Christ in the world of spirits. That world is spoken of as, to us at present, within the veil; we see nothing, and know but very little of it. Therefore it is called (*adns*) the invisible state. Yet, blessed be God, it is not entirely unknown. We read, in our sacred oracles, somewhat of its inhabitants, of their employments, and their bliss. Of this disciple Stephen, you heard before, that he was a man full of the Holy Ghost: that Spirit was undoubtedly imparted to him for his own sake, as well as to render him a blessing to others; to shew unto him the way of salvation, and to reveal all that it was of importance for him to know of Christ the Saviour. His soul appears to have been to him, as it is to every dying saint, his most precious treasure: as such he could not intrust a stranger with it, nor one that he either knew little, or thought lightly of.

His

His solicitude for its safety, must be in proportion to his sense of its worth: and he shews what that was, by committing it to the care of Jesus, who is Lord of all, of all worlds, and of all creatures and events in them: considering him then with peculiar pleasure as the King of Glory, who appoints to each his station and employment there; and affords protection, and communicates happiness to the whole, though ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. This was thinking and speaking highly of Christ. But his perfections and offices entitle him to all the veneration his servants can pay him in life or in death; and encourage an unlimited confidence, both for the life that now is, and that which is to come. He is Lord both of the dead and of the living (f). The Father saith, concerning this his son, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, "let all the angels of God worship him:" and his language to him is, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom (g)." Taught by his Spirit,

the

(f) Rom. XIV. 9. (g) Heb. I. 8. (6)

the Apostle Paul spake often in the highest and strongest terms, of the absolute and universal dominion of Christ. "The God of
 " our Lord Jesus Christ (*b*), having raised
 " him from the dead, set him at his own
 " right-hand in the heavenly places; far
 " above all principality, and power, and
 " might, and dominion, and every name
 " that is named, not only in this world,
 " but also in that which is to come; and
 " hath put all things under his feet; and
 " gave him to be head over all things to the
 " church." And he elsewhere represents
 this his supreme authority as founded on the
 triumphs of his cross. (*i*) Having "hum-
 " bled himself, and become obedient unto
 " death, even the death of the cross; there-
 " fore God also hath highly exalted him,
 " and given him a name which is above
 " every name; that at the name of Jesus
 " every knee should bow, of things in
 " heaven, and things in earth, and things
 " under the earth; and that every tongue
 " should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord,
 " to the glory of God the Father." And
 has not he himself given repeated assurances
 of

(*b*) Eph. I. 20.

(*i*) Phil. II. 8—10.

of the truth, as a truth of the first importance, both for the instruction and encouragement of all his faithful servants? "The
 " Father," said he to his disciples, (k)
 " judgeth no man; but hath committed all
 " judgment unto the Son; that all men
 " should honour the Son, even as they ho-
 " nour the Father." He made that declaration when he was with them in our world; and he has given a farther confirmation of it in a message he directed to his beloved John, from his throne in the heavens; (l) "Be-
 " hold, I am alive for evermore, and have
 " the keys of hell and of death." "The
 " state intended by the first of these words
 " (*αδης*) is not (says the learned Mr. How)
 " merely or principally that which we call
 " hell; that is but a small and mean part
 " of the dominion of Christ; nor would it
 " magnify his person or dignity, to say he
 " is the keeper of the dungeon: it includes
 " the whole of the unseen world; the re-
 " gion of separate spirits; and his having
 " the key of it, denotes his final decisive
 " authority to appoint every one's abode
 " there;

(k) John V. 22, 3.

(l) Rev. I. 18. compared with Ch. III. 7.

“ there ; as his having the key of death
 “ teaches us, that it is with him to order
 “ the time and manner of every one’s enter-
 “ ing upon it.” This is matter of delight-
 ful contemplation to his servants in their
 nearest approaches to that state : it is the
 kingdom of Christ my Lord, in whom I
 have trusted, and from whom are all my ex-
 pectations. “ Nevertheless,” said his apos-
 tle then, though suffering and dying, “ I
 “ am not ashamed,” ashamed of my master,
 ashamed of any thing I do or can endure in
 his cause, ashamed of my attachment to him,
 or of the confidence I have reposed in him,
 “ for I know in whom I have believed, and
 “ am persuaded he is able to keep that which
 “ I have committed unto him against that
 “ day (m).”

But we must not forget to observe, that,
 together with this pleasing persuasion of the
 supreme authority of his ever living Redeemer,
 the words before us express,

4.) An earnest desire of partaking with
 those happy spirits, who are for ever with
 the

the Lord. With this scene in view, his soul longs to enter upon it. “ Lord Jesus, thou hast with thee the departed spirits of many of thy servants, Oh receive mine ! It is just about to leave its tenement of clay, its all below ; and it is coming to thee, to put in its humble claim for a place and a part with those who are with thee in paradise. I am persuaded, that in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right-hand are pleasures for evermore. The happiest moments I have ever spent upon earth, I have spent with thee ; in the exercises of faith in thee, and of love and devotedness to thee. But those seasons have been few and short : they must always be liable to interruptions ; and they will be attended with imperfections in such a state as this : while present in the body, after all I do or can enjoy of him whom my soul loveth, I find myself absent from the Lord : shall I not, must I not, therefore, say with his servant, we are willing rather (ευδοκουμεν μαλλον) we are much better pleased with the prospect of being absent from the body, and present with the Lord. I trust my treasure, for I feel my heart, is there. I know no enjoyment I would not

resign ; no expectation I would not forego ;
 no, nor any present pain which I would not
 endure, to be with Jesus. I feel myself a
 stranger on earth ; it gets poorer to me every
 day ; many, very many, of my best friends
 in Christ are gone : I long to be with them,
 to see him as he is ; to enjoy, to love, to
 praise, to serve him ; to bear his image, and
 join the happy honoured company who stand
 continually before him to behold his glory,
 and to celebrate the riches of his grace.
 Oh ! my beloved Lord, see thy servant
 waiting for thy salvation : say, behold, I
 come quickly ; and he will gladly reply,—
 Amen ! even so come Lord Jesus. If earth
 was ten thousand times better than it is ;
 were it more free from sin, temptations to it,
 and the sorrows it occasions ; if its joys were
 more numerous, more permanent and re-
 fined, still I should say with Paul, to de-
 part and to be with Christ, will be, must
 be, Πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον, by far much bet-
 ter (n).”

We shall close these observations with
 remarking,

5.) He

(n) Phil. I. 23.

5.) He intrusts his exalted Redeemer with the care of his departing spirit. In the preceding verse it is said, that while the persecutors of Stephen were stoning him, he, like his divine Master, was employed both in imploring forgiveness for them, and the salvation of his own soul: "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit." The sacred historian seems to use the latter phrase as an explanation of the former; in that, his words express nothing more than a general act of invocation, without mentioning either the object or the purport of his address. The Greek word Θεός, for God, is not in the original: it is only said there, "he was invoking." But what is devout invocation short of an act of divine worship? or how could this good man look to any below the supreme Sovereign of life and death, either for the pardon of his persecutors or the salvation of his own departing spirit. Worship is the prerogative of Deity: when the apostle John was about to perform a similar act of homage to the celestial messenger who appeared to him, he was always forbid; (o) "See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-

(o) Rev. XIX. 10. XXII. 9.

“ fellow-servant.” But, considering Jesus as truly divine, he not only dares to bow before him, but to leave his immortal all in his hands. That were too valuable, and, to a dying believer, too important a charge to commit to a faint, an angel, or an archangel; to any one below him from whom he originally received it. Stephen, therefore, goes immediately thither in his last moments;—so likewise our dear friend, lately called to follow him. What a sermon have you, added to all you have heard from him here, in this one short sentence, uttered with his last breath on his dying bed! never forget it:—he said much in it to recommend Christ to your esteem; and the salvation of your souls through him, to your serious and immediate attention. “ Lord,” says he, “ I am thine, save me; I have no where else to flee; I have looked to no other. Thou art all my salvation and all my desire. The soul which thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood, which thou hast enlightened and renewed by thy grace; and which thou hast drawn with the sweet and powerful attractives of thy love, I now cheerfully
 resign

reſign to thy care and management, to be entirely and eternally thine.

“ A guilty, weak, and helpſeſ worm,

“ On thy kind arms I fall ;

“ Be thou my ſtrength and righteouſneſs ;

“ My Jeſus, and my All.”

We muſt now take ſome notice of what the hiſtorian relates, as

(III. The event of the whole : or the terms in which he deſcribes this good man's departure—“ when he had ſaid this, he fell aſleep.” Theſe words, in their connection, give us ſome idea of

(I.) The change he then underwent. He fell aſleep :—cloſed his eyes on this buſy, noiſy, fatiguing, enſnaring world ;—both its painful, and its pleaſing ſcenes ;—bid adieu to every intereſt, privilege, ſervice, and friend in it. As is ſaid of David (*p*), when he had ſerved his generation he fell aſleep. But the expreſſion was not, ſurely, intended to tell us of either, that his whole man ſunk into a ſtate of total inſenſibility.

Stephen's

(*p*) A&ts XIII. 36.

Stephen's solicitude about his spirit was altogether needless and in vain, upon that supposition. Where the phrases sleeping and waking, lying down and rising again, occur, they refer plainly and directly to the body: that of the human frame which is to be laid in the grave, and to continue in its bed of dust, until called forth by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, in the great day. Then, we are assured, those that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him (q). That state of the body, in which it becomes incapable of all its former exertions and feelings, and insensible to every surrounding object and event, is called its sleep. Some of you have, perhaps, heard your dear minister, with concern, both in private and in public, express unpleasing sensations, which the apprehension of this change, at times, excited in him. But his anxiety about the state of the body, as he assured me some days before his departure, was mercifully removed; and he could refer it to him to dispose of it, as he should please, to whom he had committed the care of his soul. And therefore

(q) 1 Thess. IV. 15. See also John XI. 11. 1 Cor. XV. 11. &c. &c.

therefore with sweet composure, he fell asleep. This leads us to remark,

2.) The easy and peaceful manner in which he departed, fell asleep; and that without a struggle, a groan, or a sigh; without pain of body, or distress of mind; in so much, that a dear child, on whose arms his head was reclined, did not so much as know when he breathed his last. He closed his eyes on life, as one that could leave all on earth without reluctance, and cheerfully obey his Lord's first summons:—Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace (r).

But having suggested some hints similar to these, in a preceding part of our subject, we shall, without farther enlargement here, proceed to mention,

3.) That which happily contributed to the composure of his last moments. The sting of death was taken away; but by whom? or how? He left the world with as little terror and dismay, as a person re-

E

tiring

(r) Psal. XXXVII. 37.

Stephen's solicitude about his spirit was altogether needless and in vain, upon that supposition. Where the phrases sleeping and waking, lying down and rising again, occur, they refer plainly and directly to the body: that of the human frame which is to be laid in the grave, and to continue in its bed of dust, until called forth by the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, in the great day. Then, we are assured, those that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him (q). That state of the body, in which it becomes incapable of all its former exertions and feelings, and insensible to every surrounding object and event, is called its sleep. Some of you have, perhaps, heard your dear minister, with concern, both in private and in public, express unpleasing sensations, which the apprehension of this change, at times, excited in him. But his anxiety about the state of the body, as he assured me some days before his departure, was mercifully removed; and he could refer it to him to dispose of it, as he should please, to whom he had committed the care of his soul. And therefore

(q) 1 Thess. IV. 15. See also John XI. 11. 1 Cor. XV. 11. &c. &c.

therefore with sweet composure, he fell asleep. This leads us to remark,

2.) The easy and peaceful manner in which he departed, fell asleep; and that without a struggle, a groan, or a sigh; without pain of body, or distress of mind; in so much, that a dear child, on whose arms his head was reclined, did not so much as know when he breathed his last. He closed his eyes on life, as one that could leave all on earth without reluctance, and cheerfully obey his Lord's first summons:—Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace (*).

But having suggested some hints similar to these, in a preceding part of our subject, we shall, without farther enlargement here, proceed to mention,

3.) That which happily contributed to the composure of his last moments. The sting of death was taken away; but by whom? or how? He left the world with as little terror and dismay, as a person re-

E

tiring

(*) Psal. XXXVII. 37.

tiring at night to sleep; and why?—He had not time to explain the grounds of his confidence in his last moments, but the terms themselves, in which it was expressed, sufficiently explained them; to those, especially, who knew his avowed and governing principles through life. A soul, on looking to Jesus, tells you the sting of death is taken away, and falls asleep; not doubting, but that he would graciously accept the charge; and well assured, that it must be for ever safe and happy in those hands.—

“ Nor death, nor hell shall e’er remove
 “ His fav’rites from his breast;
 “ In the dear bosom of his love,
 “ They must for ever rest.”

Permit me now to offer some farther thoughts, as reflections on the whole, that may direct to the practical improvement of the subject, and the Providence which has now called our attention to it (s).

1.) How valuable the discoveries of the gospel to dying sinners! Having sinned, we

(s) N.B. Some of the following reflections were suppressed at the delivery of the discourse, for want of time.

we have all come short of the glory of God. Nor have we merely forfeited his favour and lost his image, but rendered ourselves obnoxious to his righteous displeasure, both in the life that now is, and that which is to come. The wages of sin is death; blessed be God, that the sacred oracle does not stop there, but opens a door of hope, for even the guilty and polluted, in a dying hour. Shall we not esteem it our inestimable privilege, having been told, that by one man's disobedience many became sinners, to know, that by the obedience of one, shall many become righteous: and that, whereas by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead? These should be welcome tidings to us at all times; but, if capable of feeling, we shall feel their peculiar value and importance in a dying hour, when every other comfort and hope fails, and when about to appear before God. You have, perhaps, heard many a believer say then, I would not be without the consolations of the gospel now, for a thousand worlds.

2.) How admirably endearing the compassion of Christ to such ! His compassion, not only as it appears in the discoveries of his gospel ; but likewise in the seasonable and all-sufficient application of gospel grace, to administer consolation and a good hope in those solemn and important moments. When we come from the dying-bed of a believer, finishing his course in the triumphs of faith ; not only borne above the pains of death, and the various solemn and affecting scenes of a dissolution ; but discovering in his very countenance, in all he says, and in his whole deportment, an uninterrupted composure, nay a divine joy ; while we congratulate our honoured friend, we cannot but admire the exceeding riches of the grace of Christ. What a kind, condescending master is Jesus to his servants ! He not only promises, they shall be for ever with the Lord ; but comes and meets them on the way, to carry them through and above all the difficulties of their passage, and to cheer their hearts with delightful foretastes of their eternal bliss.

3.) How

3.) How important an application to Jesus Christ in life, as you wish for safety, comfort, and hope in him, in a dying hour! That hour will shew you the vanity of every other refuge and dependence; nothing you are, or have, or may have done yourselves, or that any fellow-creature, either on earth or in heaven, can do for you, will avail you then. None but Christ; none but Christ! And as you wish to be enabled to apply to him in that trying period with courage and hope, it concerns you to flee to him now. Indeed you may not have either ability or time for it then; but if you have a long warning, and now stop your ears, and harden your hearts against him, may he not justly say to you in that day, as he has threatened he will to such sinners, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me (t)." Yet now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. The

(t) Prov. I. 25.

The Lord is yet waiting, that he may be gracious. Wherefore the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. He sends you messages of love: with open arms and heart, he says, come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. He will give it you now; and you will taste the sweetness of it in your renewed application of faith and hope to him, when flesh and heart faileth. You will then go to him as to a tried friend; whose love you have experienced; who has the charge of your immortal soul, and with whom, from all you know of his perfections and promises, you can cheerfully leave it.

4.) How unreasonable the slavish fear of death, in those who have trusted in Christ! Such as know him not, or are strangers to his grace, may well be afraid of dying. I sometimes wonder, that such are not perpetually overwhelmed with the dread of their dissolution: but their eyes are blinded, and their hearts dreadfully hardened. I hope better things of some of you: that, thoughtful of your latter end, you have been enabled,

bled, humbly and thankfully, to embrace the provision made in Jesus, for the salvation even of the chief of sinners : crying out with Paul, “ Oh to be found in Christ ! you have fled to him ; lived upon him by faith, and it has been your desire and delight, that Christ may be magnified in and by you, both in life and in death. Why then distrust his care or tenderness for your last moments ? Have you been taught to honour and trust in him, as the only Mediator between God and man ? Have you again and again made a solemn and entire commitment and surrender of yourself to him, as your only Redeemer and Lord ? And will he fail to fulfil the hopes he has encouraged you to entertain from him ? Can you suppose, that he will leave that soul to perish at last, that has renounced every other dependence, to trust only in Christ ? that he will order you to be finally and for ever separated from him, whom he has taught to love him above all, and to delight supremely in his presence ? You will say, perhaps, I do not so much fear the fatal consequences of death, as the pangs of dying : and why are you afraid of them ? Suppose them sharp and long, cannot

Jesus uphold you under them ? and make it appear, that his grace is sufficient, even for such a dying day ? And shall we be unwilling or afraid to suffer then, if we may glorify God in the fire ? But, say you, what if I should sink under my sufferings ? And why should you fear it ? if the Lord be with you, (and you have no reason to apprehend he will then, or ever, forsake you) if he perfect his strength in weakness, are you afraid you shall sink then ? rather say with that his servant, who sang of him to his ancient Israel, (u) “ Though I walk through
 “ the valley of the shadow of death, I will
 “ fear no evil ; thou art with me ; thy rod
 “ and thy staff they comfort me.” But let me suggest another thought here ; would you, could you, henceforward, be so much afraid of the agonies of death, if an eye and ear-witness of the deceased in his last moments ? He had been as much afraid of dying as you can be ; and when it came, it was nothing more than falling sweetly asleep.—It has proved the same to many of the Lord’s servants ; and he that has the keys of death, can make it equally easy and safe to you.

Once

(u) Psal. XXIII. 4.

Once more,

5.) How much have we, in the review of such an end, to comfort us on the removal of a servant of Christ! God forbid that it should be said, on occasions like these, the righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart. We feel our loss, and may lament it: families, churches, ministers, mourn when the faithful fail from among the children of men. But let neither refuse to be comforted; they lived and they died to the Lord. They would not have wished or been willing to live always here. But Jesus lives, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And while we rejoice, and hope in him as such, both for ourselves and our children, we will bless his name, for all he has wrought in and by one and another of our fathers, whom he has called away. Formed for himself, in life and in death, they shewed forth his praise. May the mourning family, that has now lost its honoured head, and you, my Christian friends of this society, deprived of your beloved minister and pastor, feel the efficacy of that divine consolation under the bereaving Providence!

vidence! Permit me to conclude with the few following anecdotes concerning him:

How much have we in the review
 Mr. John Olding, whose death we lament, was born at Dartmouth, in January, 1722. I am told, he discovered a serious spirit in his youth: whereupon, he was sent to Northampton, to be educated for the ministry, under the care of the Rev. Dr. Doddridge. His steady piety, and the regard he discovered for the distinguishing principles of the gospel, rendered his first ministrations generally acceptable. Having received an invitation to a congregational church at Gloucester, he went from the academy thither in 1742. There he was ordained; and he continued in the pastoral relation to that church until 1754. In the spring of that year he first came to Deptford, and was set apart as the pastor of this church the October following. And ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you, to his dying hour. I mean not to intimate, that you considered him as a perfect character: he had his imperfections; and he felt for them. But you are thoroughly persuaded,

suaded, that he had this occasion of rejoicing,—the testimony of conscience ; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world, and unto you-ward.

That simplicity and godly sincerity, so strongly and uniformly marked his conduct as a man, a Christian, and a minister ; and that in all his transactions, both with God and his fellow-creatures, that there is not, perhaps, any one word by which he may be more justly characterized, than that of our Lord concerning Nathaniel, (x) “ An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile.”

I shall therefore leave with you the exhortation of the apostle Paul, in the 13th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, ver. 7,
 “ Remember him who hath had the rule
 “ over you, and hath (long and faithfully)
 “ spoken unto you the word of God ; whose
 “ faith follow ; considering the end of his
 “ conversation.” Amen !

(x) John I. 47.

T H E E N D.

handed, that he had this occasion of rejoicing—the testimony of conscience; that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with earthly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had his conversation in the world, and unto you-ward.

That simplicity and godly sincerity, so strongly and uniformly marked his conduct as a man, a Christian, and a minister; and that in all his transactions, both with God and his fellow-creatures, that there is not, perhaps, any one by which he may be more justly characterised, than that of our Lord concerning Nathanael, (x) "An Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile."

I shall therefore leave with you the exhortation of the apostle Paul, in the 13th chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, ver. 7. "Remember him who hath had the rule over you, and hath (long and faithfully) spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow; considering the end of his conversation." Amen!

(x) John I. 47.

T H E E N D.

